

end is furnished by the devotion to the souls in Purgatory. We shall for the present only mention a few virtues, that are cultivated and nourished by this devotion.

The devotion to the poor souls quickens our faith. It continually presents to our mind the great fact of eternity, and ever reminds us of death and of the next world. It is, so to speak, a continuous great mission that preaches the great eternal truths to us in a most impressive and effectual manner. Precisely because this monition of death is more indirect and gentle, its effect is deeper and more lasting. Thus this devotion is a mild and friendly, yet no less serious monitor of the End of Man. As the remembrance of the last things is a preventive of sin, the same may well be said of this devotion.

This devotion moreover greatly furthers the practice of charity. It proposes all the natural motives and inducements for the exercise of charity. Goodness and amiability of character, which so readily elicit our affection, ought to enlist this affection at once for the souls in Purgatory. They have divested themselves of all those imperfections, which often prove so powerful a barrier against love on earth. They are endowed with all those qualities of heart, patience, meekness, love, benevolence, which according to the words of Christ take possession of the kingdom of earth, i.e., of the hearts of men. Among these souls we count those who had a special claim upon our love whilst they yet lived on earth. If we have perhaps neglected to exhibit this love toward them in life and now after their death bitterly regret such neglect, we may be consoled by our ability of now showing them far greater charity. There are still higher motives, however, to prompt our love of those souls. All supernatural love is based upon the fact that our fellowmen possessed either sanctifying grace, or at least the ability

of obtaining this grace. When this ability ceases as with the damned in hell, then the command of supernatural love also ceases. We are absolutely certain that the souls in Purgatory possess sanctifying grace and hence enjoy the supernatural love and friendship of God. This at once earnestly commends them to our own supernatural love and affection. A person is entitled to our love in proportion to his nearness to God, and intimate union with Him. Since these souls in Purgatory are much nearer to God than we Christians who are still banished children in the vale of tears, since their union with God is secure for all eternity, they furnish us the most exalted motive and most worthy object of our love. Our affection for the poor souls is far purer and nobler than the love for fellowmen on earth. No sensual and earthly motives enter into our love for the poor souls, it is purely of a spiritual and heavenly nature. Furthermore our love for them is unselfish and disinterested, or if it is accompanied by any self-interest, it is the highest and noblest form of self-interest.

In a like manner as this charity for our fellowmen, our love of God is strengthened and nourished by the devotion to the souls in Purgatory. Every act of virtue works an increase of grace and charity in the soul of man. Then again, the means, which we employ to assist the suffering souls, prayer, mortification, the reception of the Holy Sacraments, the use of the Sacramentals, the gaining of indulgences, necessarily further our progress in the love of God. The love, which ascetics call the love of contrition, is sustained and increased by the penitential works, which we offer up for the poor souls. The love of benevolence wishes that God be ever more honored and glorified. By helping the souls in Purgatory to attain to the beatific vision of God, we contribute materially to the greater